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Seth Czaplewski Thesis

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Seth Czaplewski - Masters Thesis - 2014

Washington University - MFA



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Seth Czaplewski Outline

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Abstract

My work investigates the history of production and how human interactions have been affected by shifts in production over the course of the past two hundred years in the United States: the pre-industrial, Industrial Revolution, and the post-industrial age. The changes that occurred in society as a result of how production shifted from era to era informs my artistic practice and productions, which address areas neglected in the wake of progress. At the onset of each era, the technological advances initially appeared to be beneficial to society and people shifted from being locally oriented to being globally oriented.

My historical research has inspired me to create new fragments that anticipate, dedicate, and monumentalize sites of former production and interaction. I do not see my work as existing in a single time, but rather a compression of the eras that changed the place. My works are non-linear historically based sculptural markers that remain on the sites I explore. The pieces and the sites engage people that live and work in areas selected and it is my intent to spur conversations about the state of the area. If it were not for artists, some of these issues and others like it may never have been brought to the surface for society to address.

CHAPTER ONE: Pre Industrial revolution (Years: prior to 1850)

Prior to widespread industrial development, local markets, local resources, and local commodities dominated as the time and resources it took for goods to be transported long distances was too great to be worth the effort or unfeasible due to the shelf life of consumable goods. What one ate, consumed or produced primarily depended season and location. Essentially people were rooted to place. The resources available, coupled with one's skill sets determined a great deal about one's life. In the United States this way of life was prevalent until approximately the 1850's, when the North America Industrial Revolution began.

"Prior to industrialism, the home was the site of both consumption and work. People tended to live where they worked, be that on a farm, next to a workshop, or near an attached storefront. Even within a household, most products, from soap to clothing, had to be made by hand."¹

During the time frame of the pre-Industrial Revolution people were very connected to the materials they used, as well as the changes they wrought in the local environment. Even more important they were much more connected to other people geographically and socially. When people knew who made their goods there was accountability for the quality or lack thereof. For example if someone up river from you was throwing production waste in the river, which made your water supply undrinkable, you could approach them about their practices. Interactions were much more tangible because the buyer knew the seller. Furthermore when labor took place, it was social and intimate. When people sewed clothing or linens it was often done in a social group, and the same went for preparing and growing food

2. Richard Sennett summarized a portion of his book his book "The Craftsman", saying

"The argument I've presented in this book is that the craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others. Both the difficulties and the possibilities of making well apply to making human relationships."³

The relationships developed by being productive with others have shaped social development for a very long time. In the early 1800's making goods domestically allowed and demanded people to know greater aspects of their trade. Essentially everything was made by hand. If a person made clothing or shoes, he or she knew how to produce and attain every aspect of the good. There was no mystery in how things were made, as people were makers. People knew the source of their materials, as well as the environmental impact of attaining them, and the building process from beginning to end. I believe this way of life also made goods made by others easier for one to understand, as each individual was a maker him or herself and understood design, functionality, and construction. Therefore people could not be persuaded by illusions of what goods could do for their lives.

Chapter 2: The shift to the Industrial Revolution (1850's – 1970)

In the initial switch to mass-produced goods, these early products were basic ones such as shoes, clothing, and soap. How were American people convinced to make this switch from locally made goods to national brands? The department store and mail order catalogue facilitated this transition, as they were new outlets for attaining a wide variety of goods all from one source. The first Sears mail catalogue was distributed in 1888 and by 1896 mailer catalogues became even more prevalent with Free Rural Delivery by the Post Office.⁴

“Alan Trachtenberg notes that department stores did not just sell merchandise; they sold ways of using merchandise, “educating” customers as to the role a certain commodity could play in their lives. Carefully arranged window displays of, for example, the latest furniture designs, showed individuals how to use products as part of a good life, a life defined by what one bought.”⁵

When industrialization started to take over, people left home to work in factories, resulting in a drastic change in their way of life. In the industrial factory the process became mechanized and the goods were manufactured to be sold in a retail market. People were making many of the same goods in the home that they were making in factories. However in the home it more directly benefited themselves. In the factory monetary profit primarily benefits the business owner, rather than the worker. The industrial factory also took up the workers time, leaving them with less freedom to make the goods needed for daily life and or, by changing their thought process making them think they no longer even need to produce their own goods.⁶ Uprooted from the home and divorced from the process of making

domestic goods, the interactions of skilled labor that caused strong personal relationships were not taking place as frequently.

“The industrial revolution, as Karl Marx observed, resulted in an increased separation between laborers and the products of their labor, and between those involved in the different stages of production. Food producers, processors and consumers were alienated from one another, with activities like brewing, milling, and baking taking place in centralized factories, away from production of the raw materials, away from the places where they would be sold. A traditional miller, who sold his flour to his neighbors and fed it to his own children, wouldn’t tamper with it. Flour from a factory in some far-off city location, sold by some intermediary somewhere else, was much easier to adulterate. Food production became more complicated and more anonymous; there were more opportunities to interfere with it and less likelihood of that interference being detected.”⁷

With the emergence of department stores and mail catalogues, U.S. society saw the rise of the advertising industry. Advertisers aided or manipulated, depending on your point of view, this switch from local markets to mass produced goods in a global market.⁸ Edward Bernays was possibly the most influential person to the early advertising industry. His book titles include “The Engineering of Consent” 1947, “Propaganda” 1928, “Public Relations” 1945, and “Crystallizing Public Opinion” 1923. The titles are telling enough of his intentions. In “Propaganda” Bernays wrote that “In almost every act of our lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons [...] who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires that control the public mind, who harness old social forces and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world.”⁹ To sum up his intentions, his basic aim was to get people to stop

thinking, producing, and acting the way they want, and to persuade them to act, think, and purchase the way a select few desire them to operate.

According to Bernays "A single factory, potentially capable of supplying a whole continent with its particular product, cannot afford to wait until the public asks for its product; it must maintain constant touch, through advertising and propaganda, with the vast public in order to assure itself the continuous demand which alone will make its costly plant profitable."¹⁰ This suggests that Bernays among others thought that the mass production system could not support itself without manipulating the public into thinking that they "needed" the products. It also suggests that these large factories were unsustainable unless they convinced a majority of the population to act, think, and purchase in a unified manner.

The "good life" portrayed by advertisers made the transition to mass market branded goods both desirable and widespread. Advertising the illusion of the "good life" was now available to be purchased rather than lived. The message of the "good life" and "American dream" was and remains a psychological product that came with the consumer product that was being portrayed and sold. Rhetoric of "the American Dream" lured people to become consumers and leave behind previous modes of living.

The "American Dream" became both an advertising concern and a tool of foreign policy. In 1959 in the Kitchen Debates, Vice President Richard Nixon debated with premier Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow over the virtues of American Life during the height of the Cold War. The debate took place at the American National

Exhibition in Moscow, which had models of American life on display, and was dedicated to reinforcing the illusion of consumer choice. Nixon equated the "model" suburban home with freedom "To us, diversity, the right to choose, is the most important thing.... We don't have one decision made at the top by one government official.... We have many different manufactures and many different kinds of washing machines so that the housewife has a choice."¹¹ According to Nixon, the capitalist lifestyle was being presented as "full of choice" to the Soviets, yet the United States was there to confront the Soviet lifestyle and the choice represented in the U.S. was the choice for consumers. If the American lifestyle were truly full of choice, not just consumer choice, it would not need to go to other countries and contest their way of life. U.S. foreign policy during the cold was an attempt to get more people and countries to participate in its modes of production and distribution. However the wastefulness of this was not fully considered. By the end of the debate it became clear that the U.S. government was establishing consumerism in partnerships American ideals. However the role of the government is irrelevant to consumerism. Consumerism is a business issue and makes me question who truly controls the government. At this time I suspect corporations were in control.

Since the start of the American Industrial Revolution, and in approximately the last 150 years, there has been a drastic shift away from local materials and local goods. The railroad, mechanization, shipping channels, industrialization, communication channels, and the automobile allowed goods and people to travel much greater distance in less time. Where society once had nearly all goods

consumed and produced in the same locale, the Industrial Revolution changed that and fewer goods became produced regionally for regional use. This timeframe saw great change in how goods were produced, distributed, and consumed.

“Manufactures ‘rationalized’ production; they broke down a production process down into discrete, uniform tasks. Workers were responsible for just one task, decreasing the need for skilled artisans. Factories used new technological inventions to reduce their reliance upon skilled workers still more; machines performed tasks people once had. Workers were increasingly referred to as “operatives”, appendices to the machines that were the real producers.”¹²

By giving workers one small repetitive task, skilled craftspeople started to disappear, allowing factories to pay less as the jobs available required little to no prior knowledge of a trade. This specialization greatly reduced the number of people who had knowledge of an entire trade.

Likewise the loss of the craftsperson further disconnected consumers from materials as well as the environments from which they were produced. Now that people are less aware that the local environment has things to offer, and also that the people there have things to offer, people become more willing to exploit and neglect local environments and human relationships suffer. If we take into account the loss of the craftsman and the concurrent rise of advertising, it is clear that advertising became more effective and it also became easier to exploit consumers when they no longer know how things are produced. Although a business owner gains money in this equation, all consumers can easily be exploited without craftspeople present that understand the quality of things produced.

Shortly after the implementation of mass production and today, it has become common practice for corporations to consolidate production and set up shop wherever is cheapest to operate. Although this situation happened earlier, it reached a tipping point in 1970 for The United States, the last year in which the country exported more goods than it imported.¹³ Global trade policies allowed for U.S. production to move to other countries where factories can operate for less money. By 1970, the United States entered a postproduction consumer driven society. Large corporate interests are no longer concerned with the people they employ, and as a result, workers became disposable and can be replaced by anyone anywhere. U.S. society became vulnerable in this process because the goods needed to sustain our society are no longer made in our society. Furthermore the knowledge of how to produce has left with the production compounding our vulnerability.

Chapter 3: Post-industrial Society (1970 – present)

“As it is generally understood today, globalization is a post-industrial capitalist phenomenon with far reaching implication for the world in the political, economic and cultural spheres.”¹⁴

I have researched numerous instances of how industry and globalization have come to influence people in the modern world. One example is how corporations lobby and propose laws that exclude individuals from competing with what they produce. Monsanto, a chemical and agriculture business, proposed a law making it illegal for individuals to grow their own food in the United States. Proposed HR 875 of the 111th Congress (2009) would have held backyard gardens and home kitchens to the same standards as agriculture industries.¹⁵ This measure would have made the home garden and kitchen illegal. Taking away the right to produce your own food and cook for yourself would have made Americans dependent on large corporations for all nutrition. To state the obvious, this is a bad position to be in. The culture in agri”culture” would have also completely disappeared from our society with this law, turning food production into “agri-industry”. Machines would have replaced the human element that fosters a culture around food. Luckily the bill did not pass, as it would have affected every single US citizen.

People in a society that rely on machines for nearly every daily need, like most present day Americans, are incredibly vulnerable to disruptions in their current way of life. For instance if the United States of today, 2014, experienced a solar flare to the scale of the most recent large flare of 1859, “ The Carrington Event”

the country would possibly enter a new dark age.¹⁶ Not only would all communications be down, but the ability to access monetary funds in banks would halt because they rely on Internet communications. Huge portions, if not the entire electrical grid would not function.¹⁷ Since our society relies on the electrical grid for food, water, heat, money, and producing just about all of the few goods left in U.S. based industry, instead of relying on or maintaining diverse local production. This makes us incredibly vulnerable to disruptions to our current way of life adopted during the Industrial Revolution.

“The Greatest Dilemma faced by the modern artisan craftsman is the machine. Is it a friendly tool or an enemy replacing work of the human hand? In the economic history of skilled manual labor, machinery that began as a friend has often ended up as an enemy. Weavers, bakers, and steelworkers have all embraced tools that eventually turned against them. Today the advent of microelectronics means that intelligent machines can invade realms of white-collar labor like medical diagnosis or financial services once reserved for human judgment.”¹⁸

Not only does this quote from Richard Sennett explain his view on how machinery has replaced the human hand in basic goods production like making bread, but he extends it further to address contemporary situations and white collar jobs. In Sennetts view, being a doctor or a banker is no longer safe from mechanization. The reality I live in completely backs up Sennett’s writing. For example, attaining educational loans I never once had to communicate with a real person, the entire process was done through an automated form online. To address his assessment that the medical field will also succumb to mechanization, Sennett was on point again. Although in many instances I view this as a good thing with the medical profession like in the case of a machine analyzing blood work to check for

diseases. I do view it negatively when machines, such as the "Solo Heath Station", are addressing people's health at the neighborhood Wal-Mart to get them signed up for the correct government health care program. As a one size fits all method does not fit for the medical field, the replacement of doctors with machines is not going to be good for patients in many cases.

As I mentioned previously the goods initially sold in department stores at the onset of the industrial revolution were essentially the same products previously manufactured in homes. The exception to this would be technological advances that were developed as a result of mass production. Specifically machinery like the sewing machine, the ability to produce steel in great quantity, and the automobile were advances that were not being manufactured in the cottage industry. However their development happened so fast they were only seen in a positive light, without thinking about their negative impact.

With technological advances taking place so rapidly as a result of mechanization, products initially seem beneficial, yet the negative effects of their coming into being often gets overlooked. This is most certainly the case with the automobile. The obvious benefit of this invention is that it allows people to travel long distances in short periods of time and, as a result goods can be transported very fast. Clearly, when the automobile was invented pollution concerns were not in the general public's thought process. From that point forward everyone has suffered the consequences of pollution from automobiles entering the earth's atmosphere. Also with the automobile becoming the dominant mode of transportation in the

United States, we have paved over millions of square feet of once living earth and made it extremely hard to travel with anything besides an automobile. The same case could be made for nuclear power, especially considering that the world, for the third time, is in the aftermath of a nuclear plant meltdown.

“But in our acts of making, we are also always unmakers. In our desire and need to create, we human beings fell trees, break eggs, kill animals, level mountains and damage ecologies. Such is the blind power of our anthropocentric drive that so many of our practices conceal this omnipresent unmaking. What actually needs to be faced is that while our ‘being destructiveness’ is unavoidable, how much, and what is destroyed demands to be visualized prior to the act of destruction. This needs to happen so that action can more become a matter of ethical judgment and socio-environmental accountability.”¹⁹

Chapter 4 Analysis of my work: The Form

In my art making process I research history books relating to a specific area, and create site-specific works in response to the history I uncover. These sites often only have a trace left of their former use, usually in the form of a dilapidated building. Just as frequent, these past histories are not evident at all and the slate has been wiped clean. Once a work is completed I leave my sculptures permanently outdoors and document the sculpture in its setting.

Some aspects to my making are present in each work. I will cover these briefly then go into further detail about each. To date, most of the sculptures have had a ceramic base to them. The rest of the work starts to elevate from the base with rebar or wood, and they are stilted up (Image 1). At various levels, within the same work, there are food production areas, areas of other production, and miniature dwelling areas. The upper portions are precariously made and look as if they are on the verge of falling over at any moment. All are on a miniature scale, under seven feet, but directly reference the larger world they inhabit. Connections to other portions of the work are made rapidly with getting the connection made fast the first priority. Everything is put together rapidly suggesting a necessity to do so.

Miniature dwellings or architectural references are present in each work (Image 2). I use the dwelling because how people live has been greatly changed as a result of industrialization. The dwellings are elevated and ungrounded, perched in the stiling. Gaston Bachelard once said in "The poetics of space" "A house

constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of Stability.”²⁰ I completely agree and in regard to the neighborhood I currently work in the dwellings are unstable, falling, and nearly all the buildings are in peril. I think that it is not just an illusion of stability for the houses but for the entire society. The society is unstable now and once was stable when it functioned differently.

The ceramic base to each work is a fragment of a whole. These portions are made by constructing a completed ceramic form, then severing the ceramic portion into multiple chunks. It is important for them to be fragments as the neighborhoods I work in have become fragmented and were once whole. The ceramic base also ties these sculptures to each other with a visual cue that they are related to one another. Through proximity and a clear visual connector to one another I aim to make it evident to the audience that each sculpture is related to the next sculpture as the sites are related to one another. (Image 3/4)

I see the ceramic portion as a past trauma that people have to build out of or that is their starting point. The work essentially grows from these amorphous and fragmented shapes. They are not clearly recognizable and what happened to get them in their current dilapidated state is also somewhat ambiguous. However destruction and disrepair are clearly evident. The ambiguous nature of the base reflects how “slow catastrophes” can be imperceptible to local people while they are unfolding. Firing clay essentially turns these sculptures to stone. Turning something to stone is a very slow geological process taking thousands of years. These ceramic

elements play into this compression of time in my work and often have other debris piled in them like different layers of time. (Image 5)

Rising up from the ceramic base the sculptures are stilted. As stated earlier, I typically use rebar and wood. They are not new material and show signs of having an earlier use. This stiling up of the works is done rapidly. Joints are wrapped, rapidly welded, or resting on one another, basically whatever will make the bond stick with any material available. The aesthetic is dictated by building out of necessity. This stiling elevates the production and dwellings on platforms above the ground, in order to reinforce the partial destruction and uninhabitable nature of the ground. People have salvaged what was possible to raise himself or herself out of this event or continuing event. (Image 6)

This stiling is also a metaphor for how people have become ungrounded and displaced through the changes that occurred as a result of the industrial revolution. The way the neighborhood worked prior to the Industrial Revolution was much more grounded and oriented with the people of the neighborhood in mind. That all changed when mass producing goods became the standard and jobs left the area as a result of the globalization of trade. These developments are unsettling to me and the stiling of the works is built to be on the verge of toppling just like the neighborhood looks like it is on the verge of collapse.

In my work aspects of destruction and growth are present. I represent the globalized market as destruvtive and the locally oriented market as one full of potential and growth. Both sides are contained in my works with the ceramic base

representing destruction and the plants bringing literal growth. What plants are present is also an important. Sunflowers are the most common plant I use because of their ties to the area and how they function as a restorative plant. Sunflowers were a staple of the Mississippian Native Culture that once thrived in the St. Louis area. Little is known about their culture but what plants they grew is one of the few things that is known for certain about them. Sunflowers are also considered a green manure plant; meaning when they grow and eventually die, the soil will become more nutrient rich. This is a gesture from me to the site, and I scatter sunflower seeds surrounding the placed sculptures. The rest of the plants are all edibles. I believe producing food is one of the greatest things missing in our society today. Everyone eats and realistically more food should be present where people live. I believe producing food in the U.S. in today's world would make people reconsider how we treat the natural environment, each other, and how cities are planned.

Analysis of my work: The site

My site-specific sculptural works are created in response to a place, situated, documented, and left on location to engage the public about that locale. I find local histories especially interesting and chose sites based upon the goods that were once produced at specific locations, former modes of interaction, and how the sites have changed. The works are in conversation with the past but are intended to incite conversations in the present concerning both the past and the future, creating non-linear historically based sculptural markers. I draw upon past people, industry, and site uses in the creation of new fragments that anticipate, dedicate, and monumentalize the site. I don't reference one time and place: instead, my works are an interwoven meeting point of a number of events that happened throughout history.

I have been primarily working with one neighborhood, Old North in St. Louis. This neighborhood was lively in its formative years and has declined greatly since the switch to globalized markets. The goods that were formerly produced in Old North have made an impact on what I create. For example I am working with several sites on 14th street in North St. Louis. What was produced at each site is rather different from one another; a former lumberyard, a former small leather crafting store, and a former confectionary. All are connected as they were long standing businesses in the area that disappeared as a result of how manufacturing changed. All three sites have inspired sculptures and what was formerly produced there is evident in my works.

The interactions people formerly had in these neighborhoods has also inspired my sculptures and use of sites because the interaction that occur now are drastically different. For example along the Mississippi River in Old North their once was a fifteen-acre plot for residents to use as they saw fit. Similarly there was communal farmland in the area where anyone could plant or raise animals. The land did not belong to one person, rather it belonged to everyone. This same area today has signs letting people know it is illegal for them to be there. I have used this place as a site for my sculptures and have also scattered thousands of seeds there, using it again as I desire and making reference to its relationship to food production.

All of Old North has drastically changed for the worse since both production and skilled labor have left. The craftsman is no longer present. It has been a slow decline and there is barely anything made there today. The leather craft store formerly on 14th street had been there for about thirty years before it closed in the early 20th century. I found out about it from an old newspaper article that praised it. Today that site has a vacant building. These changes in the area hint at its future to me. This small example also points to what lays ahead for the U.S. society in general as we ship our production off to other countries. This devastation to a local area and the people is not isolated to Old North and is also evident in cities such as Detroit and Pittsburgh. If the practices developed in the industrial revolution are continued without conversation about its effects, the same fate may affect the entire country.

When making artwork about a specific place I find it more potent for the artwork to be on the site with which it is concerned. Many artists do use specific

sites that inspire artworks. However many times those artworks are uprooted from the site they reference. I believe that lessens the potency somewhat because the audience that experiences the art, out of place, is not the audience that has to deal with the issue in reality. Even so, I find artists like this inspiring and influential to my use of sites and events. Ai Weiwei's work "Remembering" is a work I feel aligned with, although the visual form and scale are very different from mine (Image 7). The work consists of 9,000 children's backpacks and say's "She lived happily for seven years in this world". The work deals with the May 2008 earthquake that hit Sichuan, China. Ai Weiwei investigated what caused so many schools to collapse and the children in them to die during the earthquake. Weiwei discovered that due to government corruption, the schools were built using inferior materials. This work is dealing with that event but it is doing so in a German exhibition, rather than a Chinese one. ²¹ I do find the work to be effective but I believe it would have been stronger if it were exhibited in the context of an area affected by the event.

I do not like being further disconnected from other people, the goods I consume, materials, and the environment affected by my consumption. Yet this is the world I was presented as globalized factories have fragmented connections between people and the goods we use daily. This is the only world I have lived in and it's the same experience most Americans have had at least since 1970 when consumerism overtook producing. Given the fact that I have only experienced one of the modes of living it is easy for me to look back at written history and envision that goods produced locally focused on the local would be more beneficial to society as a whole. This is partially an assumption, as I have never experienced the other. Local

home-style production is simply not evident to me and the loss makes me long for it. I may never get the opportunity to experience localized production as globalism and mechanically produced goods are still ruling the day. Both modes have drawbacks and positive aspects, but my feeling is that we have lost balance.

I don't think one should dominate at the others expense like globalized mass produced goods and businesses have dominated locally oriented markets. Rather I believe it would be beneficial to be situated in both the local and global market equally. Diversity in modes of production would handle unexpected events the best and put society in a less precarious position. Because these events are still unfolding I believe that the way society produces and consumes may be cyclical and there may be a swing towards the local again in time and the two may again coexist but hopefully as equals. This shift is already beginning and is evident as CSA's, farmers markets, and microbreweries. I demonstrate this principle in two ways through my work, the first being my involvement in the larger art community through use of photography and, for the second, my presence in the local community with the physical sculptures. The works are primarily about a local environment and the works stay on site to engage the local audience while photographs allow me to bring this narrative to the wider public outside of the specific place.

Knowledge of production was once passed down from one generation to the next, but today it is not as common. No tangible skill set passed to me from my father, or from his father to him. These skills are still present in U.S. society somewhat and are most evident in rural communities. Rural communities are on the

decline however and there are far fewer farms today than 100 years ago despite the dramatic population increase. Just as the factory consolidates production to one place, these skills have also become consolidated instead of being widely dispersed among individuals. In my practice I attempt to relearn basic skills that I don't see that often in modern society. Leather crafting, working with wood, growing food, and making confectionary goods are a few skills I am researching and learning about. Reproducing and relearning these crafts is highly symbolic of what I would like to see happen with production in the neighborhoods where I work in. (Image 8/9) Remaking some of these goods by hand also allows me further insight into the history I research. Whether it is constructing leather bags, growing food, turning raw wood into wooden beams, or making confectionary goods, each task is stopped in mid-process. I do this to make the work have unsettling qualities and to demystify the process, ultimately creating a metaphor for how the production of these trades has ceased to exist in these areas. This is very much related to my thoughts about the fragment however the actions I take are directly related to the production of specific sites.

Anaylsis of my work: Role of the artist

Along with making the message more potent with the artwork on site, another reason I place these works in public space is due to my belief that art can affect the public in a positive manner. I subscribe to the instrumental theory of art, and believe artworks can provide deeper insight into society through visual form. By placing the artwork on the site I aim to make the viewer contemplate what led to the sites current condition and what that says about the future of the site. Another artist that works in a similar manner to me, and often works under instrumental art theory is contemporary artist Simon Sterling. Often his works are three-dimensional, have some sort of action or event unfolding, and result in photographic documents. "Autoxylopyrocycloboros" (2006) a work of Sterling's, was a boat with a steam-powered engine that was powered by feeding the engine sawed off parts of the boat itself, until the boat sank. The event was documented and displayed as photos. The commentary on energy use and its nature is very clear in this work. Although different from my work, I feel that in this case Sterling's work is similar to mine in its commentary, methodology, and visual form in this case. (Image 10)

Working outside of the gallery I aim to reach a broader audience. On site and outside of the gallery I have a greater chance of people seeing the work that have an influence on the local area. The local businessman, politician, or remaining resident are likely to see these work and converse about its meaning. Art does have an instrumental quality and can affect the world for the better. Through my work I

bring attention to these neglected sites and hopefully spark a conversation about the future of the area.

In 1978, renowned outdoor installation artist Charles Simonds expounded on the connection between the real world and the art world:

"I do feel a commitment to making ideas available to as many people as possible, including art people, even if only as films, photographs and other "reflections" But I am far more interested in taking what knowledge and understanding I've gathered from art out into other contexts than I am in dragging a part of the real world into the art world.... The change must lie in a change of audience --- not bringing new goods to the same old people."²²
(Image 11)

Since then the shift of art towards being engaged with the real world has only been gaining speed. Work like Simond's expands the audience for art and expands the idea of art itself. I feel particularly aligned with this thinking and Simond's mode of working in which photos and documentation is presented to the art world. Likewise my works are left on site to engage the audience outside of a sanctioned exhibition, and when presented to the art world, photographic documents play a large role in my presentation (Image12/13). This allows me to engage both audiences, which is important to me as it can reach more people.

Art has the ability to rupture to the surface what is hidden. This is especially important today because the U.S. and the world are becoming more homogeneous as a result of globalization. Artists have a long tradition of challenging what is acceptable and "normal". If it were not for artists who would question the status quo? The mainstream media certainly does not seem to want to fill that role, and a majority of people don't seem to question the status quo either. Artists help society

problematize issues that are defutureing our world, sparking a conversation that otherwise might not happen.

I see my art in this vein of art making. Old North St. Louis looks like a train wreck today. There are numerous causes to its current condition. However if society simply accepts this and does not investigate the causes the same fate may lay ahead for more U.S. cities. Being an artist in St. Louis and a native to St. Louis I attempt to understand the city I was born in, and what caused it to be what it is today. I externalize my findings through site-specific artworks. This aids the public to see the situation from my viewpoint and the conversations that start because of art affect the world for the better.

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Image 1 (My Work)



Image 2 (My Work)



Image 3 (my Work)



Image 4 My work



Image 5 (my Work)



Image 6 (My Work)



Image 7 Ai Wei Wei



Image 8 (My Work)

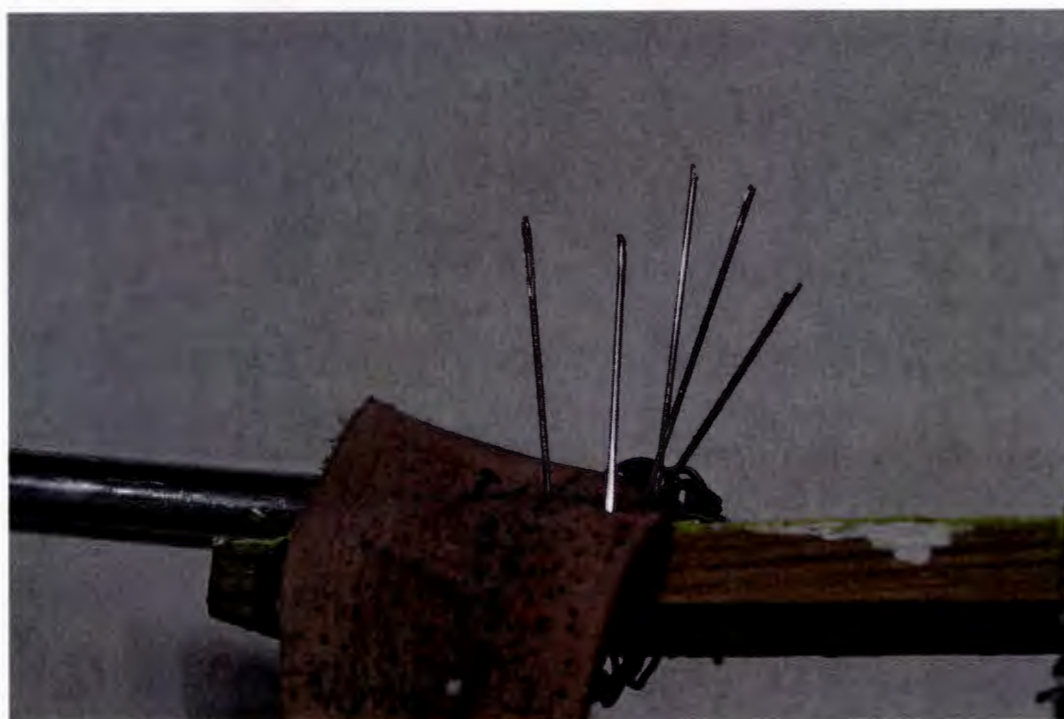


Image 9 (My Work)



Image 10 Simon Sterling



Image 11- Charles Simonds, 1971, New York



Image 12 (my work)



Image 13 (my work)

